

## **WATERSHED LESSON #3:**

### *Having a Coordinator at the Watershed Level is Desirable*

The watershed approach to protecting our lakes and streams and other water bodies involves many stakeholders and, as a result, requires a lot of coordination. A good coordinator is key to a successful watershed protection effort.

Having a coordinator based within the watershed is important because it provides a focal point for the watershed effort and helps to ensure that someone is paying attention to moving group activities along. The coordinator's role varies depending on the needs of the watershed, but generally it includes maintaining contact with members of the watershed group; performing liaison with interested parties beyond the group; celebrating success; calling, facilitating, and summarizing meetings; helping to secure funding and training; and ensuring that watershed plans are developed, implemented, and effective in achieving the desired outcomes.

A coordinator may be a volunteer or a part-time or full-time paid staff person. He or she may be housed in government offices, a non-profit organization, or out of someone's basement. In general, they should be from a group that is trusted and that has the power to make a difference. The ideal coordinator is one who can commit to spending enough time to really make a difference. Part-time and volunteer coordinators have been able to accomplish a lot for watersheds, as have individuals located outside the watershed. As for funds, securing financial resources to support a staff person is not always easy; fortunately, many groups have been creative in establishing multiple funding sources to support watershed coordinators.

### ***Example: Tensas River Watershed Benefits from Having a "Homegrown" Coordinator***

The Tensas River Watershed, Louisiana, has benefited from the attention of Mike Adcock, born and raised in the area. His position has been funded through the U.S. EPA wetlands and nonpoint source programs, USDA Conservation District program, and the Nature Conservancy. The McKnight and National Fish and Wildlife Foundations have also provided funds.

Mike has been working in the Tensas River watershed for over four years. The major issue in the watershed is the severe loss of wetlands. Originally, 90 percent of the watershed was bottomland hardwood wetlands. Over 80 percent of these wetlands have been lost, resulting in flooding and in sediment and nutrient runoff to the river.

Since most of the remaining wetlands are on privately owned farms, landowner involvement is critical to restoring the water quality in the watershed. Being present in the community has helped Mike build trust with the farming community. This has

involved a lot of one-on-one interaction. Mike began by identifying farmers in the watershed who were willing to demonstrate the economic benefits of wetlands restoration and conservation tillage practices. For example, one farmer restored 640 acres of bottomland hardwood wetlands, then arranged for other farmers to visit his farm and see the benefits for themselves. Farmers listen to one another, which is demonstrated by the fact that the demand for enrollment in the Wetlands Reserve Program far exceeded the supply of funds in this watershed.

### ***Duck Hunters Love It.***

Mike Adcock emphasizes with farmers that the measures are voluntary, and he sees his role as a supportive one. Many farmers, he says, are interested in the economic benefits associated with good management practices, including such things as precision farming and water quality control structures. Water control structures not only allow for seasonal flooding of farm land, thereby providing increased time for sediments to settle out, but they have the added benefit of providing good habitat for waterfowl. Duck hunters love it, as do the farmers who receive the revenue.

***For more information:*** contact Mike Adcock, NE Delta RCD, 4274 Front Street, Winnsboro, LA 71295, 318-435-7328.

### ***Stony Brook Watershed, Massachusetts Where It Was Hard to Sustain the Effort with Just Volunteers***

Ginny Scarlet, member of the Stony Brook Watershed Association in the Merrimack River Watershed, attests to the fact that it is difficult to sustain efforts without a dedicated coordinator. The group had funds to support a part-time coordinator to help develop a watershed 'report card'. When the funds ran out, volunteers had to jump in and finish the final report. After its completion, the group lost momentum to a large degree. Ginny says that they would like to be able to update the watershed report card and continue the monitoring necessary to assess the status of the watershed's resources, but it is on hold until the Association can get the ball rolling again.

***For more information:*** contact Virginia Scarlet, 508-263-5710

### ***Key Contacts and Resources***

#### **FUNDING SOURCES**

- ***Watershed Protection: Catalog of Federal Programs***, describes federal programs that provide funding or technical assistance for watershed projects, EPA-841-B-93-002, available from EPA's publication clearinghouse, 1-800-490-9198. EPA staff contact, Joan Warren, 202-260-7796 (updating).
- ***EPA Clean Water Act Section 319 Grants Guidance***, grant support through states to

support nonpoint source control, [www.epa.gov/OWOW/NPS/guide.html](http://www.epa.gov/OWOW/NPS/guide.html) or contact EPA Nonpoint Source Branch, US EPA, 401 M Street, S.W., 4503F, Washington, D.C. 20460, 202-260-7100.

- ***EPA Wetlands Grant Guidance***, grant support to locals and states to protect wetlands. Contact Lori Williams, USEPA, Wetlands Division, 401 M Street, S.W., 4502F, Washington, DC 20460, 202-260-5084.  
<http://www.epa.gov/OWOW/wetlands/98grant.html>
- ***National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation***, 1120 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 900, Washington, DC 20036, 202-857-0166, 202-857-0162 (fax), [www.nfwf.org](http://www.nfwf.org). Contact: Kathleen Pickering. Since 1990, this group has invested more than \$1 million in federal matching funds toward formal and informal watershed education programs for youth, teachers, and other community members.

#### COMMUNITY SUPPORT TOOL

- ***Sourcebook for Watershed Education*** provides details on creating or enhancing programmatic support for watershed education and problem solving. It includes information on developing program vision and goals, obtaining community support and participation, program review and assessment, and sharing your story with others. Developed by Global Rivers Environmental Education Network, 206 South Fifth Avenue, Suite 150, Ann Arbor, MI 48104, [www.econet.apc.org/green/](http://www.econet.apc.org/green/) (313) 761-8142.